THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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98 Weekly parts No.1

VICTORIA'S REIGN: THE HIGH NOON OF EMPIRE

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To Our Readers:

In the months to come, we shall be journeying together through the centuries when British men and women laboured and fought and died to build their great Empire.

It will be a journey packed with discovery and emotion: of joy in moments of triumph, of sorrow in moments of tragedy, and even – in moments of horror – of disgust; but overwhelmingly of pride in the lasting accomplishments of generations of soldiers, sailors and civil servants, of missionaries, merchants and planters. Their achievements have indeed lasted: they have moulded much of the modern world. How should they be judged? We shall present the evidence, in words and pictures, for you to make up your own mind.

To ensure authenticity, we have been in close and constant consultation with the British Museum, the Royal Commonwealth Society, the National Maritime Museum, the India Office Library and many other scholarly institutions in the United Kingdom. In addition, we have had the advantage, during two and a half years of preparation, of using the world-wide research facilities of Time Life/BBC. And the entire publication was reviewed by two specialists in Imperial and Commonwealth studies, D. K. Fieldhouse and A. F. Madden, Fellows of Nuffield College, Oxford.

A definitive appraisal of the British Empire would require the genius of an epic poet. Our goal is more modest: we shall be satisfied if we can convey to our readers an understanding of how the people of a small island kingdom should have come to rule so large a part of the world and – taken by and large – to have done it so well.

Harold C. Field

These tokens are valuable see inside back cover.

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HIGH NOON OF EMPIRE

Imperial scenes decorate an invitation to a colonial ball in London's Guildhall.

For 300 years, British traders, adventurers and politicians acquired the scattered bits of land that came to be called "the Empire." But it was only in the 1890s that the fact of Britain's rule over these far-flung possessions fired the imagination of her people. The imperial frenzy culminated in June, 1897, at the Diamond Jubilee that celebrated the 60th year of Victoria's rule. This first chapter of "The British Empire" recalls the concentrated emotion of Jubilee year as a prelude to the extraordinary story, which will be traced in subsequent issues, of how the British came to rule over a quarter of the earth's surface ❧

By James Morris

At midday on Tuesday, June 22, 1897, Queen Victoria of England, Defender of the Faith, Empress of India, ruler of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, arrived at the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral in London to thank God for the existence of the greatest Empire ever known.

The representatives of an imperial caste awaited her there. Bishops of the Church of England fluttered with hymn-sheets and remembered half a century of Christian effort – the suppression of slavery, the conversion of heathen tribes, mission stations from Niger to Labrador, new dioceses from Auckland to Calcutta. Generals and admirals blazed with medals and remembered half a century of satisfactory campaigning – in India or in Egypt, against Ashanti tribesmen or Maori chiefs, up Burmese backwaters or creeks of Manitoba. There were aged proconsuls of Empire, bronzed or emaciated by tropical lifetimes, and attended by faded wives in lacy hats. There were scholars in the gowns of Oxford and Cambridge, the twin power-houses of British ideology. There were poets, musicians and propagandists, whose transcendental theme of the day was the splendour of imperial Britain:

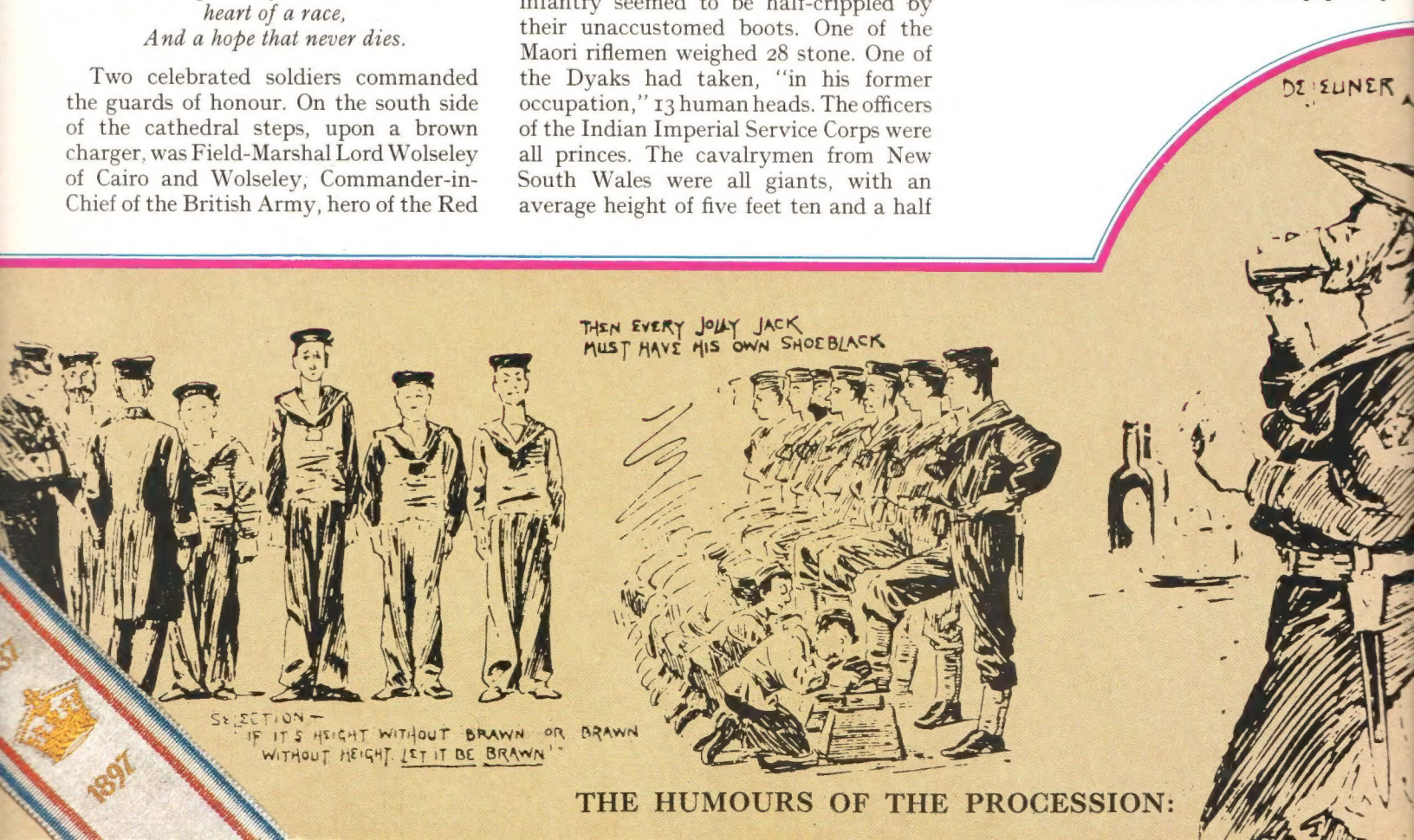
England, England, England,
Girdled by ocean and skies,
And the power of a world and the
heart of a race,
And a hope that never dies.

Two celebrated soldiers commanded the guards of honour. On the south side of the cathedral steps, upon a brown charger, was Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley of Cairo and Wolseley, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, hero of the Red River expedition in Canada, the Ashanti War in the Gold Coast, Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt, and many another imperial war, looking, after 45 years of more or less constant campaigning, a fairly melancholy 64. On the north side, upon the grey Arab which had carried him victoriously to the relief of Kandahar in 1880, was Field-Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar, Pretoria and Waterford, veteran of two Afghan Wars, the Indian Mutiny and the Abyssinian expedition, whose sweet, simple nature and unfailing courage made him the idol of the private soldier and earned him immortality as Kipling's "Pocket-Wellin'ton" in *Bobs*.

Behind these allegorical marshals, like legionaries in imperial Rome, soldiers from every part of the Queen's Empire honoured the royal presence. The Chinese from Hong Kong – one of whom sported a pigtail that reached right to the ground – wore wide coolie hats. The Zaptiehs, Turkish military policemen from Cyprus, wore fezzes. The Jamaicans wore white gaiters and gold-embroidered jackets. There were Dyaks from Borneo, and Sikhs, and Canadian Hussars, and Sierra Leone gunners, and Australian cavalrymen, and British Guiana police, and Maltese, and South Africans, and a troop of jangling Bengal Lancers led by a solitary English officer in a white spiked helmet. Some of the colonial coloured infantry seemed to be half-crippled by their unaccustomed boots. One of the Maori riflemen weighed 28 stone. One of the Dyaks had taken, "in his former occupation," 13 human heads. The officers of the Indian Imperial Service Corps were all princes. The cavalrymen from New South Wales were all giants, with an average height of five feet ten and a half inches and an average chest of 38 inches. And Captain Ames of the 2nd Life Guards, at six foot eight inches the tallest man in the British Army, was the princeliest and most gigantic of all, mounted on his charger and wearing his monstrous plumed helmet of burnished steel.

Satraps from many parts of the Queen's dominions had converged upon London that day: tributary bigwigs of every colour, religion, costume and deportment, prime ministers of the self-governing colonies, maharajahs and nawabs and hereditary chiefs, governors of distant possessions, military leaders from far commands. There were representatives from other respectful powers: The Dowager Empress of Germany (the Queen's eldest daughter); Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary (whose assassination at Sarajevo in 1914 was to begin the First World War); 23 assorted princesses; a scattering of grand dukes and duchesses; 40 Indian potentates, including the dazzlingly uniformed Lieutenant-Colonel Maharaj Dhiraj Sir Pertab Singh, aide-de-camp to His Royal Highness, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales; Monsignor Cesare Sambucetti, the Papal Nuncio, improbably sharing a carriage with Chang Yen Huan, the Chinese Ambassador; General Nelson A. Miles,

Sketches like these in the popular pres



THE HUMOURS OF THE PROCESSION:

Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Army, renowned for his victories over the Sioux and Apache tribes; and Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, inventor and builder of the rigid airship.

Since the firing of the celebratory guns in Hyde Park that morning, all London had waited in grand expectancy for this moment – the greatest of capitals, on a climactic day of its history. Vast crowds had applauded the Queen in her procession, as she made her way from Buckingham Palace to St. Paul's in a plain open landau, beneath a parasol of white lace. On Constitution Hill an army of civil servants, released for the day from their red tape and dockets, discreetly waved pocket-handkerchiefs. Nearby, 300 girls from the Royal Victoria Patriotic Asylum stood beneath a loyal banner: "To Victoria, our beloved Queen and foundress, 300 orphan daughters of Your Majesty's sailors, soldiers, and marines say 'God Bless You'." At a balcony window on Ludgate Hill survivors of the Charge of the Light Brigade, 43 years before, had assembled to offer their now frail allegiance. Among them was Sergeant William Jones, aged 70, who had set out for London three weeks earlier from Ratportage, Ontario. Around St. Paul's itself the windows of the City offices were crammed with sightseers and festooned with banners: on their roofs gay pavilions had been erected, on their balconies company directors and opulent wives looked down with a proprietary condescension upon the resplendence below. Buildings were blazoned with loyal slogans – "One Race, One Queen," or "God Bless Our Sovereign." Lillywhite Frowd, the sports goods manufacturers, applauded "Her Most Gracious Majesty's Grand and Glorious Innings – 60 Not Out."

The fashionable had paid large sums for balconies and stands along the processional route. The Cockney poor yelled and sang their loyalty at street level, hoisting cheerful, grubby children upon their shoulders, hitching skirts or waving cloth caps to follow the parade along the pavements. One man darted into the road outside the Royal Courts of Justice, where the Griffin marks the boundary of the City, grabbed a shoe cast off by one of the horses, and triumphantly waved it above his head with a cry of "Jubilee luck!" Several girls wore blouses made from Union Jacks. To the delight of the crowd, a cavalry drummer twirling his drumsticks over his head managed to knock off his hat as the parade passed the Monument to the Great Fire of 1666. Guns boomed, bands blared, a million Union Jacks flew, voices from the crowd shouted "Go it, old girl!" or "Three Cheers for India!" In the Strand, where the crowd was singing "Soldiers of the Queen," a troop of Dragoons dismounted for a long halt and found a bottle of liquor lowered to them on a string from a first-floor window, followed by showers of cigarettes. In the poorer quarters south of the Thames, roofs and balconies were black with spectators.

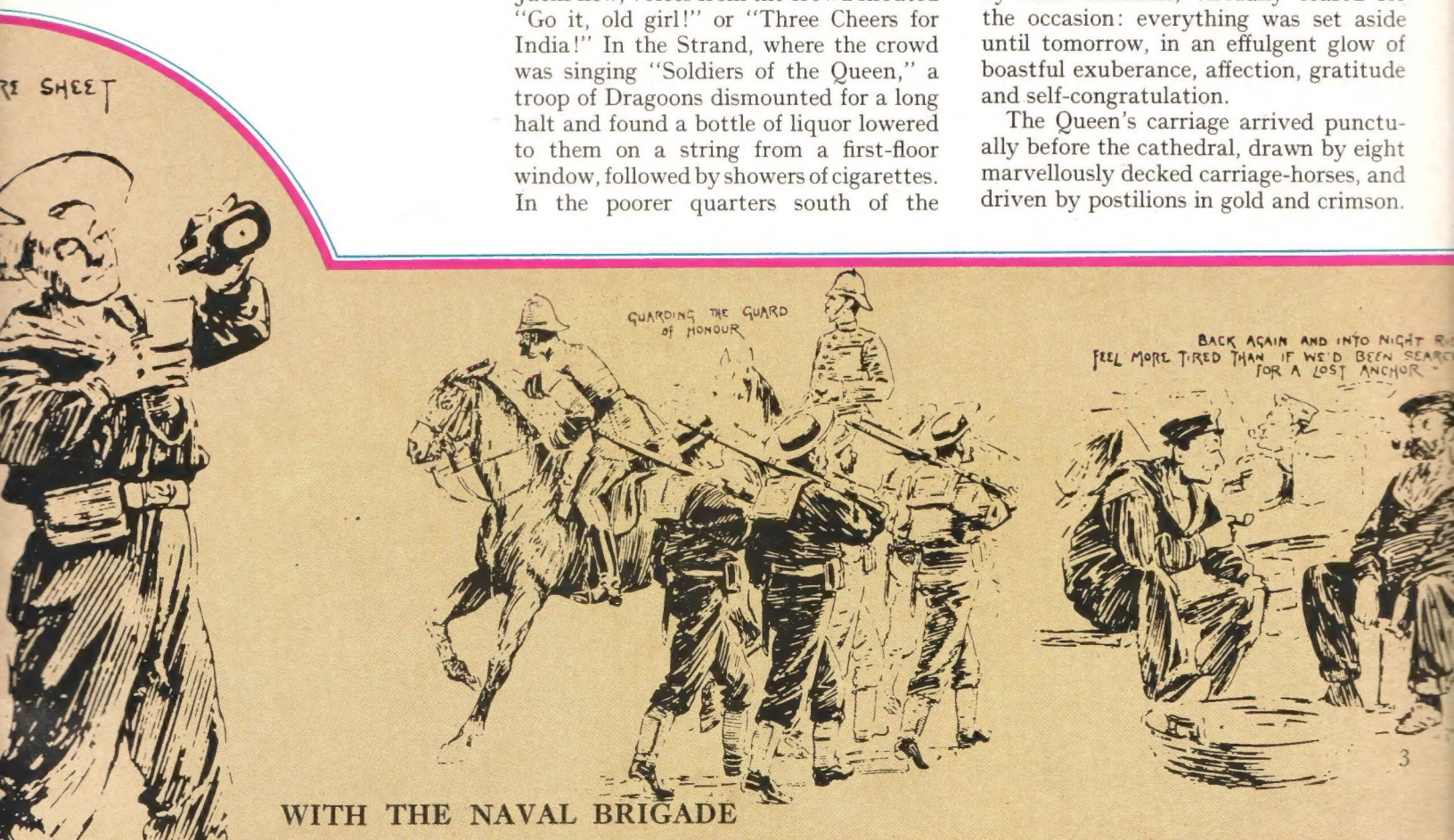
The Queen was worried about possible accidents – at the Tsar's coronation 3,000 people had been trampled to death and in Paris not long before 200 people had died when fire swept through a charity bazaar. Nothing awful happened. After the procession had passed, the streets, "hitherto trim . . . became a howling waste of torn newspapers, paper bags, orange peel, crusts of bread, and general debris of a gigantic picnic." But, considering the immense numbers of people who were in London for the great day, the profusion of temporary stands and the unusual demands made on ancient balconies, it was startling that there were no serious accidents, little fainting and no special pushing or crushing. The crowd remained in high humour.

Officialdom was as anxious as the Queen, not least about her own safety. At Paddington Station, to which the Queen travelled from Windsor, officials of the Great Western Railway tested the strength of the ramp that led to her carriage. They were only satisfied it was safe after the Queen's coachman had inspected it with care and the heaviest man present had stamped, jumped and heaved his way up and down it.

The ordinary life of the grey and ancient city, its smoky skies illuminated that day by fitful sunshine, virtually ceased for the occasion: everything was set aside until tomorrow, in an effulgent glow of boastful exuberance, affection, gratitude and self-congratulation.

The Queen's carriage arrived punctually before the cathedral, drawn by eight marvellously decked carriage-horses, and driven by postilions in gold and crimson.

fanned the mounting Jubilee excitement.



WITH THE NAVAL BRIGADE

She was greeted by her own dear Albert Edward (the future Edward VII), mounted, feathered and carrying a marshal's baton, and by a squadron of miscellaneous nobility assembled on horseback in the cathedral square. There was a fanfare of trumpets, and as the Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the Established Church throughout Her Majesty's Dominions, raised his prayer-book for the thanksgiving service, two scarlet-coated military bands struck up *The Old Hundredth*:

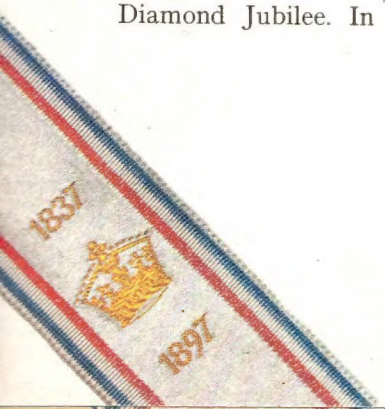
All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

The Queen was 78 years old, and it had once been suggested that her carriage might actually be hauled inside St. Paul's on ramps up the great steps.

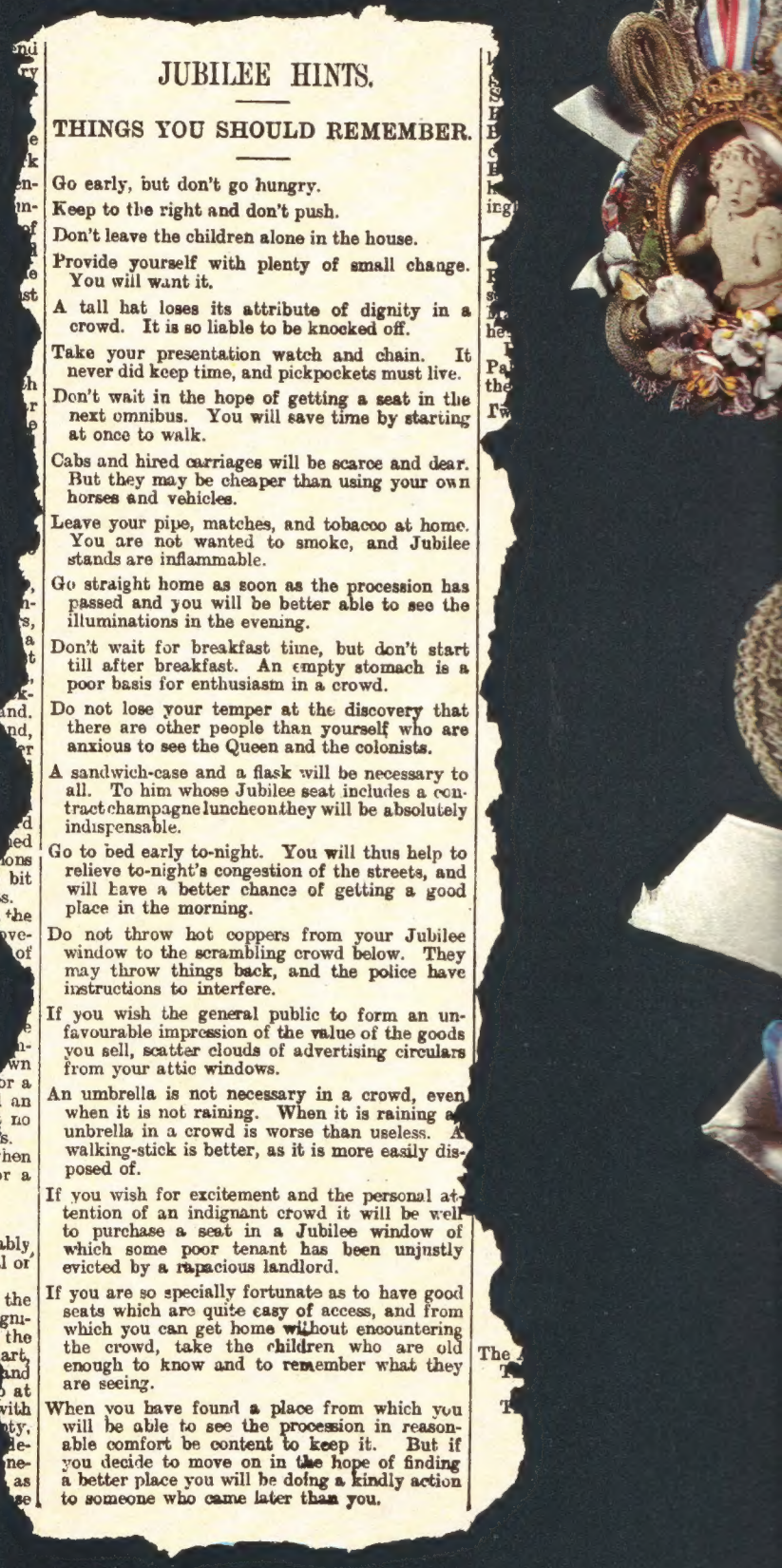
This dramatic expedient was abandoned; instead the service was held outside, the Queen remaining in her seat. It did not matter. The accumulated history of a thousand years gave dignity to her portly presence. The power, wealth, beauty, gusto and arrogance of an Empire swirled about her carriage. As the hymns of praise rang out that day, to the thump of the regimental bands and the swell of the great organ inside the cathedral, not merely a congregation, nor even a kingdom, but a quarter of the world figuratively sang its loyalty too – giving patriotic thanks to a God who seemed, despite his alien origins, to have given ample proof that he was thoroughly British.

The Queen was pleased. At the end of the day she dutifully wrote in her Journal: "A never-to-be-forgotten day. No one ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me, passing through those six miles of streets.... The crowds were quite indescribable and their enthusiasm truly marvellous and deeply touching.... Every face seemed to be filled with real joy. I was much moved and gratified."

The excuse for this grandiloquent jamboree ("the first pan-Britannic festival," as *The Times* called it) was the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. In 1887 her Golden



Newspapers publicized advice for the great day and street vendors sold badges of the Royal Family for a few pence. The ones shown here portray Victoria's three-year-old great-grandson, the future Edward VIII; her grandson, later George V; and the Queen herself. Brooches (like the one top centre) were somewhat more costly.



JUBILEE HINTS.

THINGS YOU SHOULD REMEMBER.

Go early, but don't go hungry.

Keep to the right and don't push.

Don't leave the children alone in the house.

Provide yourself with plenty of small change. You will want it.

A tall hat loses its attribute of dignity in a crowd. It is so liable to be knocked off.

Take your presentation watch and chain. It never did keep time, and pickpockets must live.

Don't wait in the hope of getting a seat in the next omnibus. You will save time by starting at once to walk.

Cabs and hired carriages will be scarce and dear. But they may be cheaper than using your own horses and vehicles.

Leave your pipe, matches, and tobacco at home. You are not wanted to smoke, and Jubilee stands are inflammable.

Go straight home as soon as the procession has passed and you will be better able to see the illuminations in the evening.

Don't wait for breakfast time, but don't start till after breakfast. An empty stomach is a poor basis for enthusiasm in a crowd.

Do not lose your temper at the discovery that there are other people than yourself who are anxious to see the Queen and the colonists.

A sandwich-case and a flask will be necessary to all. To him whose Jubilee seat includes a contract champagne luncheon they will be absolutely indispensable.

Go to bed early to-night. You will thus help to relieve to-night's congestion of the streets, and will have a better chance of getting a good place in the morning.

Do not throw hot coppers from your Jubilee window to the scrambling crowd below. They may throw things back, and the police have instructions to interfere.

If you wish the general public to form an unfavourable impression of the value of the goods you sell, scatter clouds of advertising circulars from your attic windows.

An umbrella is not necessary in a crowd, even when it is not raining. When it is raining a unbrella in a crowd is worse than useless. A walking-stick is better, as it is more easily disposed of.

If you wish for excitement and the personal attention of an indignant crowd it will be well to purchase a seat in a Jubilee window of which some poor tenant has been unjustly evicted by a rapacious landlord.

If you are so specially fortunate as to have good seats which are quite easy of access, and from which you can get home without encountering the crowd, take the children who are old enough to know and to remember what they are seeing.

When you have found a place from which you will be able to see the procession in reasonable comfort be content to keep it. But if you decide to move on in the hope of finding a better place you will be doing a kindly action to someone who came later than you.

Jubilee – 50 years upon the throne – had been commemorated more orthodoxly, its chief visiting celebrants being other Heads of State. Since then, though, an imperial fever had overcome the British. The possession of an overseas Empire had become the prime cause of national pride, and for the first time imperial power had become popular politics. The British – or more properly the English – had ruled an overseas empire of sorts since the days when their Norman kings held parts of France. Over the centuries they had won, lost, acquired or abandoned slabs of territory all over the world, without as a rule much noticing the process. The historian Sir John Seeley had observed that the British Empire was acquired "in a fit of absence of mind"; certainly it had been acquired gradually, almost incidentally – in piecemeal conquests, diplomatic swaps, penal settlements, for convenience of trade or hope of evangelism. One petty acquisition led to another. To secure one possession its neighbour was annexed.

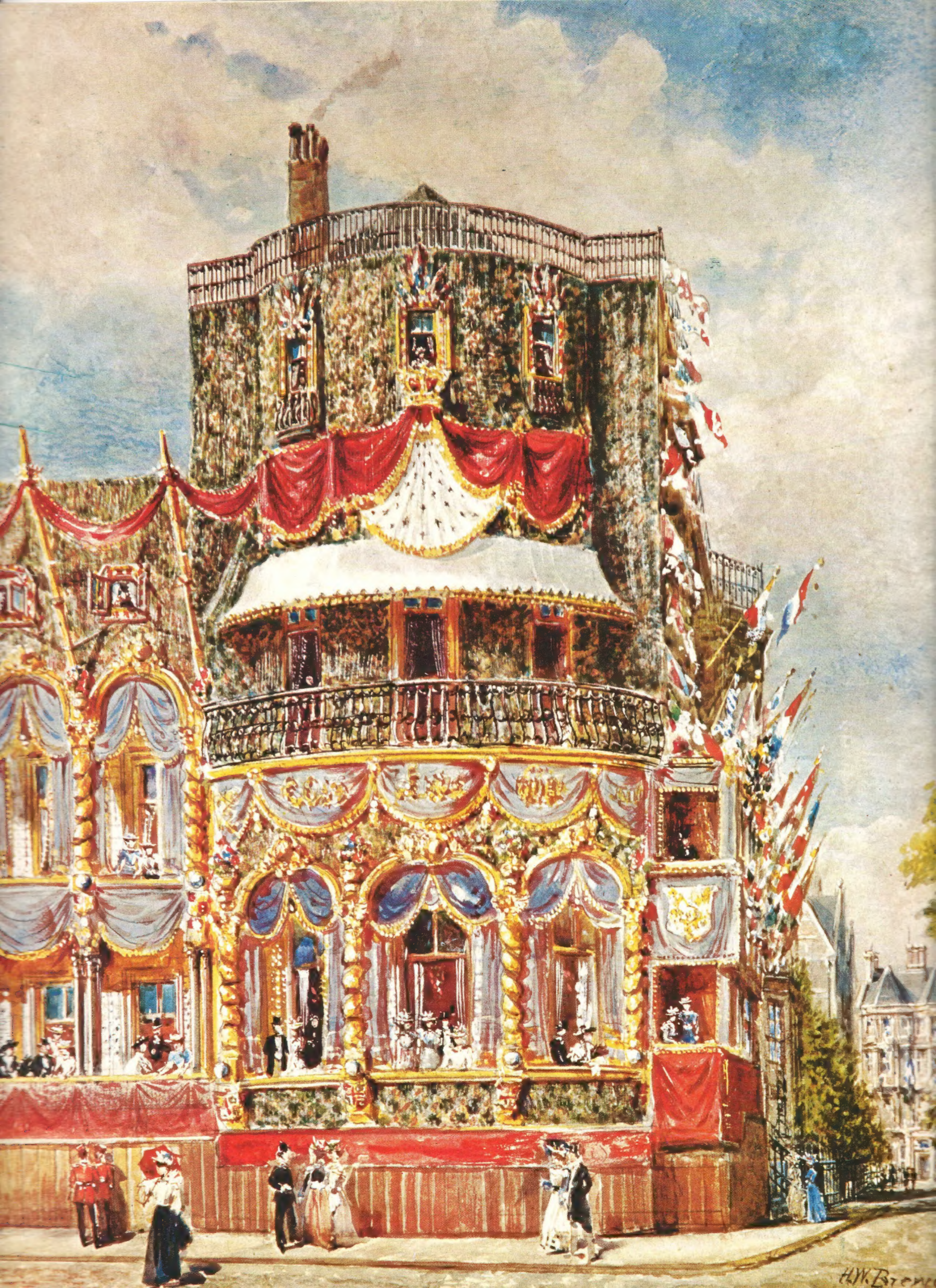
The public had generally been indifferent. Parliament found the Empire an unnecessary distraction, and only a small professional minority knew much about it. The British were a close-knit, highly patriotic community of islanders, living by trade, passionately concerned with domestic politics, and generally preferring their own company to that of any damned foreigners. In normal times they found more stimulation in a social dispute, a folk-pageant or even a horse-race than they did in the spectacle of foreign conquest and dominion.

But the 1890s in Great Britain were not normal times. This was a flushed and heady decade, the last of a century that had been a long triumph for the island nation. Her people had launched the Industrial Revolution, one of the decisive events in the history of mankind, and had thereby made their small unpromising island the richest community in the world. Despite the fearful economic disparities that disfigured their society, they had shown themselves politically mature and stable beyond all other nations. It was no wonder, then, that they rejoiced ❧

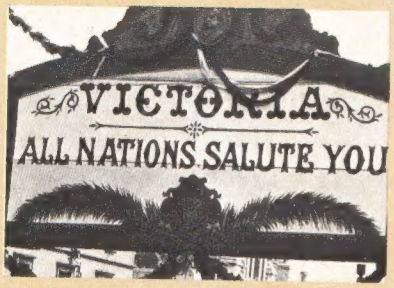
LONDON'S GREAT DAY

Queen Victoria, the Great and Good, had been on the throne longer than most of her subjects could remember. After six decades of vigilant and conscientious rule, she had become the personification of England and Empire. Now, on June 22, 1897, her subjects, giddy with patriotic excitement, flocked to London from countryside and suburb to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. Throughout the night the railways poured a jubilant throng into the capital, while thousands more tramped in from outlying districts to line the richly decorated procession route. Avid schoolboys and frail survivors (above) of the Charge of the Light Brigade in 1854, Cockney costers and company directors, curious office-boys and assured bobbies – all prepared by their presence to offer Victoria proof of their resounding allegiance.

Town-houses along Piccadilly, like this one, were gaily decorated for the Jubilee Parade.



The Filoscope (right), a gadget small enough to fit in one hand, was introduced towards the turn of the century. By flicking through a sequence of photos like those on these pages, each of which advanced the action of a scene by small steps, an illusion of motion could be created. With this device, memorable events such as the Jubilee Parade could be recalled at leisure by those who had been present and seen by those who had not.



The Queen left Buckingham Palace at 11.15. As she did so, the sun swept away the persistent morning haze. The poor who had festooned the portico of

After a halt outside St. Paul's Cathedral, the procession swept up Cheapside to frenzied cheering from the cro

The superb horsemen of the New South Wales Lancers, like other Australian cavalry clad in slouch hats and khaki uniforms, excited much admiratio

Here as elsewhere along the route, the Queen was visibly and deeply touched by her subjects' outbursts of devotio

A Parade of Imperial Glory

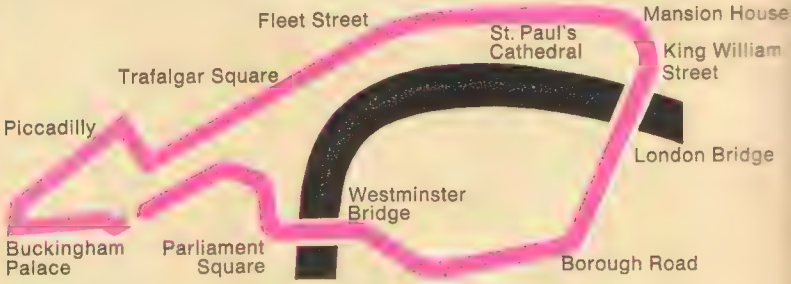
Preparing for the march past, the poor jostled for places on the pavement, while the rich watched expectantly from the comfort of their mansions, Pall Mall clubs and their stands, erected specially for the occasion. One of the largest stands, in Whitehall opposite the Horse Guards, had taken six weeks to build and had seats which sold for up to 20 guineas.

The procession itself – and the country's uncritical patriotic fervour – was powerfully captured by the *Daily Mail*'s star reporter, George Steevens. "It began," he wrote in his spellbinding manner, "as it should begin, with the fleet. Swinging and dancing up the hill came the tilted straw hats of the naval brigade" to be followed by troops of "every colour, every continent, every race, every speech – all in arms for the British Empire and the British Queen.... A living gazetteer of the British Empire.... How small you must feel in face of the stupendous whole, and yet how great to be a unit in it."

Then "as if by an inspiration which ran down the lines of the people, there burst out quite spontaneously, the grand old anthem of love and comradeship: 'For Auld Lang Syne' rose from a thousand throats in a chorus that overbore the brazen strains of the bands ... cheers broke into screams and enthusiasm swelled into delirium."

And there, at the centre of it all, "was a little plain flushed old lady ... so very quiet, so very grave, so unmistakably and every inch a lady and a Queen. All in black, a silver streak under the black bonnet, a simple white sunshade, sitting quite still, with the corners of her mouth drawn right down, as if she were trying not to cry.... So very quiet, so very grave ... almost pathetic if you will that small black figure in the middle of these shining cavaliers, but also very glorious."

National Gallery in Trafalgar Square in the hope of an unrivalled view were disappointed; they were moved on, for the area was reserved for nobility.



which included Christ's Hospital schoolboys in blue silver-buttoned coats.

After receiving orchids from the Lady Mayoress at the Mansion House, the Queen went into King William Street.

Crossing London Bridge, the procession passed through the Borough Road to the Houses of Parliament and finally back to Buckingham Palace by 1.45.

On a spot later marked by an inscribed slab, the Queen's carriage halts by St. Paul's for a brief service.

Churchmen and choristers intoned the Te Deum, sang "All People That on Earth Do Dwell," and then cheered the Queen to the echo.

II. The Spirit of Empire

By 1897, the British had proved themselves the most gifted, resolute and formidable people of their day. Their long military supremacy, throughout the years of Victoria's reign, had given the world a general peace – the Pax Britannica – of unprecedented length: small wars there had been by the dozen, but none of those dominating international conflicts that have always been the norms of history. A dazzling list of heroes and geniuses had, within the past century, brought lustre to their reputation: in war, Nelson and Wellington; in letters, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Tennyson, Dickens; in art, Turner and Constable: in science, Darwin, Faraday, Lister; in politics, Palmerston, Gladstone, Disraeli. It had truly been an age of giants, and during its mid-Victorian climax Britain was respected as perhaps no other power had ever been. Her manners, tastes and values were copied or adopted everywhere. Her products, technicians, ships and expatriate eccentrics were ubiquitous. Her prestige was terrific. Her self-esteem was limitless.

Now, at the end of this triumphant century, suddenly Empire was all the rage. It was a vulgar conception, fostered by vulgar means, and it thrived upon the atmosphere of *fin de siècle* – a gaudy "end-of-the-century" time, brassy and sensational. The new Penny Press, preaching to a huge newly literate audience, seized upon Empire as a popular circulation-builder. A hazy movement called the "New Imperialism" translated the enthusiasm into politics.

In the 1895 general election the Conservatives had won handsomely on a boldly imperialist platform: the Prime Minister was the sagacious Lord Salisbury, who saw the Empire as a colossal diplomatic stake, the Colonial Secretary was the businesslike Joseph Chamberlain, "Pushful Joe," who saw it as an immense undeveloped property. These two had arranged the great parade of Jubilee not merely as a tribute to 60 years of queenly rule, but specifically as a grand slam of imperialism – a crowning expression of the achievements, the ideals, the forces and the satisfactions of Empire-building. "England without an Empire!" Chamberlain had once exclaimed, "Can you conceive it? England in that case would not be the England we love." In the summer of 1897 the vast majority of the British people flamboyantly agreed with him, and waved their Jubilee flags as exuberantly for Empire as for Queen.

It was like a universal craze. The *Daily Mail*, the organ of the masses, was rampantly imperialist: but so was *The Times*, the traditional mouthpiece of the ruling classes. "Imperialism in the air," wrote the Socialist Beatrice Webb in her diary that June. "All classes drunk with sightseeing and hysterical loyalty." In the drabbest slums of Glasgow and London's East End, the Diamond Jubilee was greeted with fervent if inebriated enthusiasm. In the most sluggish rural enclaves the yokels built their celebratory beacons. The Queen-Empress herself, after 60 years of fluctuating popularity, had achieved an almost sacred status: she was a kind of fetish-figure for the simpler British, her emotional excesses forgotten, her long withdrawal into sulky widowhood forgiven, her somewhat ordinary appearance overlooked, even her mortality ignored, so hard was it to imagine a Britain without her plump and pouch-eyed sovereignty.

Now Queen and Empire had become synonymous: if you were loyal to the one, you were proud of the other. In previous moments of patriotic apogee the British had generally celebrated the continued immunity of their island State, delivered once more from the designs of foreign tyrants. Now they were honouring something different: the expansion of England, the possession of lands and territories flung across continents, the responsibilities of global power, the distribution of ideas and techniques, the unrivalled success of an Empire upon which, as the souvenir plates proclaimed, "the sun never sets."

In Britain then only a few radical thinkers, advanced economists, Irishmen and wild poets objected to the idea of Empire. Morally and politically it was generally accepted that Britons had a perfect right to impose their rule upon less fortunate foreigners: anyway, if they did not acquire the undeveloped territories of the world, other Western powers certainly would. Nevertheless, Empire, the very name of which was equivocal, meant very different things to Englishmen of different classes and professions.

To poor people Empire was largely a consolation – circuses to their lack of bread. England was "two nations" still, as Disraeli had observed. The slums of London were still horrific: the industrial cities of the Midlands and the North, whose labours were the foundations of all this glory, were among the saddest of man's artefacts; the countryside, which looked so idyllic to visiting foreigners, hid horrifying extremes of hedonism and despair. Patriotism, not religion, was the opiate of this proletariat; and at this particular moment of history patriotism was interpreted for the British people, by their leaders and their betters, in terms of imperial glory.

Life might be tough in tenement and hovel, but at least outside the flag flew, the rhythms of jingo drummed through the music-halls, and black potentates made obeisance to the Queen.

For the hundreds of thousands of Britons who had overtaken their parents by learning to read, the concept of Empire was a dramatic revelation. From office desk or schoolroom blackboard they caught a glimpse of thrilling new horizons – exotic indeed, but in a sense their own. High adventure was a passion of the time, exploited incessantly in sixpenny novel and pulp magazine, and Empire marvellously satisfied its devotees. Fact, it appeared, really was more exciting than fiction. A world of melodrama, space and opportunity seemed to lie at an Englishman's feet: and though one might not actually chuck one's job that morning, and take passage to the colonies to fight the Zulus or prospect for gold, still it was grand to know that a chap could if he wanted to. As the *Daily Mail* crowed in its Jubilee edition: "We send a boy here and a boy there, and the boy takes hold of the savages of the part he comes to and teaches them to march and shoot as he tells them, to obey him and believe him and die for him and the Queen . . . and each one of us – you and I, and that man in his shirt-sleeves at the corner – is a working part of this world-shaping force."

Then again to a substantial minority of the upper middle classes, Empire was a

Songs celebrating Victoria's Diamond Jubilee poured forth before, during and after the celebrations. Most were soon forgotten, but the theme remained a popular one, and as long as audiences remained receptive, hack writers joyously worked the vein.

credit balance. Innumerable British firms, in the 1890s, had based their fortunes upon the imperial trade. Cotton-merchants in Lancashire, coffee men in Bristol, dynasties of India merchants, speculators in gold, rubber or cocoa, ship-owners, railway-builders – all had found their paths to affluence smoothed by the fact that so much of the world was British. Trade often did follow the flag, as many British families could testify, and the expansion of England had contributed very comfortably to the well-being of those company directors and their ladies, feather-boa'd and complacent in their bowers above St. Paul's.

Upper bourgeois Britons of another kind – professional men, younger sons, soldiers – looked upon the Empire as an employment exchange. John Stuart Mill, the philosopher, once called it "a vast system of unemployment relief for the upper classes." To many educated English, Scottish and Anglo-Irish families an imperial career was a perfectly natural alternative to the Church, the law or the armed forces at home. They were not generally aristocrats who looked for fulfilment in Africa or Asia: the English patricians had happier empires of their own at home, as the Maharajah of Jaipur decided during a visit to the Curzon family home in Derbyshire. Why on earth did Lord Curzon want to be Viceroy of India, wondered this perspicacious princeling, when he could stay at Kedleston watching the rabbits and playing the flute? For the most part the imperial career men were sons of the lesser gentry, trained to the British public school ideals of grit, stiff upper lip, comradeship, good humour and a realistic degree of tolerance. Their background might have been specifically designed for the production of an imperial élite: and consistently for two or three generations they had gone off by P. & O. or Union Castle, with their spinepads for the prevention of sunstroke, their cricket-bags for the maintenance of tradition, their champagne for the sustaining of morale and their Books of Common Prayer for the elevation of pagans. They were bred to Empire, in a gentlemanly way, and took its existence easily for granted. To them, the imperial celebration was merely recognition of a long-established fact.

continued p. 16

BRITISH EMPIRE
Throughout the WORLD
EXHIBITED IN ONE VIEW

THE BRITISH EMPIRE 1897

EUROPE

Great Britain, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Malta.

Area : 157,500 square miles.

Population : 43,210,000.

The British Isles were, correctly, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. But everyday terms were looser : "Great Britain," "Britain" or even - to the dismay of Scots, Welsh and Irish - simply "England."

AFRICA

Basutoland, Bechuanaland, British East Africa, British Somaliland, Cape Colony, Egypt, Gambia, Gold Coast, Natal, Nigeria, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Sierra Leone, Southern Rhodesia, Swaziland, Transvaal, Uganda, Walvis Bay.

Area : 2,150,000 square miles.

Population : 37,900,000.

AMERICA

Antigua, Bahamas, Barbados, Barbuda, Bermuda, British Guiana, British Honduras, Canada, Grand Cayman, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, Nevis, Newfoundland, St. Christopher, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Tobago, Trinidad, Virgin Islands and other small islands.

Area : 3,094,000 square miles.

Population : 6,898,000.

ASIA

Aden, Brunei, Ceylon, Hong Kong, India, Labuan Island, Malay Federated States, North Borneo, Papua, Sarawak, Singapore.

Area : 1,700,000 square miles.

Population : 296,500,000.

AUSTRALASIA

New South Wales, New Zealand, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia.

Area : 3,100,000 square miles.

Population : 4,000,000.

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Ascension, Falkland Islands, Gough Island, St. Helena, South Georgia, South Sandwich, Tristan da Cunha and other small islands.

Area : 8,670 square miles.

Population : 6,200.

INDIAN OCEAN

Amirante Islands, Andaman Islands, Chagos Islands, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Kuria Muria Islands, Laccadive Islands, Maldive Islands, Mauritius, Nicobar Islands, Seychelles Islands, Socotra, Zanzibar and other small islands.

Area : 1,200 square miles.

Population : 400,000.

PACIFIC OCEAN

Antipodes Island, Bounty Islands, Campbell Island, Chatham Island, Ellice Islands, Fiji Islands*, Gilbert Islands, Kermadec Islands, Lord Howe Island, Norfolk Island, Pitcairn*, Southern Solomons and other island groups.

Area : 7,500 square miles.

Population : 150,000.

GRAND TOTAL

Area : 10,200,000 square miles.

Population : 387,400,000.

NOTE : There were many different forms of imperial rule and it was not always clear whether a territory was in or out of the Empire. For example, Transvaal in 1897 was only debatably part of the Empire - as an autonomous republic whose foreign affairs were under British control ; Egypt was under British military occupation, but not yet formally annexed ; and Cyprus was nominally under Turkish sovereignty, although administered by Britain.

Figures for area and population are approximate.

*This mid-Victorian map has been updated to 1897 but does not show certain islands in the Pacific.

And to many of the men who governed England, the statesmen, the greatest of the financiers, the senior civil servants, Empire was a historical instrument, and that imperial festival was a declaration of state. The possession of Empire was a counter-weight to the greater size and richer national resources of countries like Germany, Russia and the United States. It was the means of preserving Britain's greatness, upheld till then chiefly by ingenuity, courage and good luck. The politician Charles Dilke had coined the phrase "Greater Britain," to define the white overseas possessions of the Crown – Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the South African colonies. The New Imperialists gave an extra meaning to the phrase. They pictured the entire Empire, black, white or brown, as a single political force, a super-state, potential if not actual, capable of standing up to the new continental powers, maintaining the influence of the Mother Country, and keeping its more fortunate citizens comfortable and rich.

The Diamond Jubilee was not, in this concept, merely a celebration of a glorious present: it announced a yet more tremendous future, a reawakening, a renaissance. As the Governor of Ceylon said in his Jubilee speech, an imperial light had burst upon the British people, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, removing the scales from their eyes and driving away the sordid mists which had obscured their view. Or as the poet Clive Phillipps-Wolley patriotically and more lyrically phrased it:

She wakes! in the furthest West the
murmur has reached our ears:
She wakes! in the furthest East the
Russian listens and fears, –
She wakes! the ravens clamour, the
winds cry overhead;
The wandering waves take up the cry,
"She wakes whom nations dread."

Such were, for the British in their islands, the various meanings of Empire and of Jubilee: entertainment, fillip, profit, opportunity, defiance. To the Queen herself, as she returned to the palace that evening through London's demonstrative

Britons in South Africa who sent this declaration of their loyalty to Victoria were living in trying conditions under hostile Boer rule in the Transvaal.

streets, it was all delight and grateful emotion. "How kind they are to me!" she kept saying, the tears welling into her eyes, "How kind they are!" By nightfall her personal message to the Empire, distributed across the world by the miracle of the Electric Telegraph, had reached all but the most hideously inaccessible of her possessions. It was a message of Roman simplicity. "From my heart," it said, "I thank my beloved people. May God bless them."

"I thank my beloved people." This was the imperial touch, for when Her Majesty spoke of "her people" she was referring to nearly 400 million subjects living in all five continents, honouring a thousand religions, speaking a thousand languages – people of every race, culture, stage of development: occupying mud huts in the Australian outback, caves in the Kalahari Desert, exquisite manor-houses in Nova Scotia; savages who did not know the use of money, Boers like Biblical patriarchs, Hindu princes of porcelain sensibility, ancillary kings, colonial magnates, Mediterranean noblemen, dung-smeared wizards, cannibals, Confucian scholars, Eskimos, Arabs – such a variety of peoples as had never before, in the whole history of human affairs, owed their united allegiance to a single suzerain.

Queen Victoria's Empire embraced nearly a quarter of the earth's land mass, and a quarter of its population. The overseas Empire was 90 times larger than the little Mother Country, and during Victoria's own reign it had expanded from some two million square miles to more than 11 million square miles. The more rabid of the imperial activists saw almost no limit to its future expansion. Cecil Rhodes, the South African Empire-builder, was already dreaming of colonizing the solar system – "I would annex the planets if I could," he said. "I often think of that."

There had never been an empire remotely like it before. "No Caesar or Charlemagne," Disraeli once said, "ever presided over a dominion so peculiar." It was strewn in colossal muddle across the hemispheres, so that the map of the world was splodged untidily and apparently illogically with the imperial red. Though the whole of it looked to London for its supreme authority, and to the Queen for its unifying symbol, still it consisted in effect of two separate empires, differing not only racially and climatically, but historically too.

On the one hand was the Western Empire – Western, that is, in a cultural sense. This consisted for the most part of English settlements overseas, together with old plantation colonies having a substantial white ruling class. Ranging from the enormous Dominion of Canada to petty islands of the Caribbean, this scattered group of possessions really could be called "Greater Britain." Its territories shared an ethnic origin with the British at home, its people spoke the same language and honoured the same values, its predominant culture was English and its politics were mostly democratic. The great white colonies were self-governing in their domestic affairs; even some of the lesser possessions, like Barbados or the Bahamas, had old traditions

Colonial officers from every corner of the Empire, in London for the Diamond Jubilee, pose proudly before the parade that celebrated British power and prestige.

of parliamentary government. It was not too fanciful to suppose that if the power at the centre maintained its dynamism, all might one day be linked in a federal structure of equals, looking to London as a central exchange and regulator.

The Eastern Empire was something else. This was Empire of an older kind – despotic, racialist, with white men on top and coloured men below. Its fulcrum and its exemplar was India, which had been conquered by swashbucklers and opportunists, but was now governed with a frigid rectitude – as the American Emerson observed, British rule was "more just than kind." From India the British had extended their power all over south Asia, up the China Sea to Hong Kong, westward to Aden and the Persian Gulf, all down the east coast of Africa.

Throughout these immense territories only a handful of Britons lived – administrators, military men, merchants and a few planters. Nowhere was there even a flicker of self-government, nowhere more than a thin veneer of English culture. It was an Empire of aliens, ruled autocratically by temporary exiles from Britain.

Both these Empires, of Orient and Occident, were vaguely familiar to the British at home. Millions of English families had a cousin in Australia or an uncle in British Columbia; hundreds of thousands of soldiers had done their time on tropical stations. If Australia and New Zealand were considered part of the family, India had been British for so long that it had become a kind of domesticized prodigy – a phoenix in the house. What gave a new flare to the imperialism of the 1890s was the emergence of a third Empire: Empire in Africa.

Africa, the last unexploited continent, was the true backcloth of the Jubilee drama. It was there that the new lands were to be settled, the gold found, the contemporary savages humbled or converted. The British had been active in Africa for generations – as settlers in the south, elsewhere as explorers, missionaries, traders and suppressors of slavery: but it was only in the 1880s and 1890s that the African continent became the focus of their imperial obsession.

Africa gave a brutal punch to the apogee of Empire. There was a feeling at once shady and dashing to the imperial goings-on out there. A mixed bag of speculators, incongruously presided over by the stately Rhodes, represented British interests in South Africa; and the ferment which then seized the continent, which gave a fury to the gusto of the New Imperialism, revolved not so much about patriotism, or duty, or even the needs of commerce and strategy, but simply round the lust for gold. It was a tainted sort of imperialism. A man could not stay more than a couple of years in South Africa, Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood once said, "and remain a gentleman."

The British public did not care. The heroes of the day were by no means all gentlemen in the old sense – Chamberlain himself, the impresario of Empire, was a Birmingham screw-manufacturer. If the great African adventure seemed dubious to the fastidious, to many more Britons it was only a revival of Elizabethan enterprise. Drake and Hawkins had scarcely behaved like gentlemen when they went raiding on the Spanish Main. If the Victorian buccaneers of Africa broke a rule now and then, singed an alien beard or even indulged in an occasional act of piracy, they were only honouring lusty old British traditions. The "scramble for Africa," in which Britain had played a predominant role, was a true culmination of the chronicle of Empire.

Blasé about India, bored by the white colonies, the British could still be stirred by the Dark Continent. It was the last frontier. It was the great patriotic spectacle. It was the new Spanish Main. Nobody got a more heartfelt cheer from the Jubilee crowds than the Honourable Maurice Gifford, of the Rhodesian Horse. He wore his arm in a sling, having been wounded in a recent war against the Matabele tribesmen, somewhere north of the Limpopo: and as he rode uncomplainingly to St. Paul's he looked the very figure of imperial heroism – dashing, virile, knocked about a bit and always ready and eager for more adventure.

A QUEEN'S STORY

A memento shows Victoria at 18; left: her Jubilee photo at 78.

If Victoria had had a nickname, it would have been "The Unexpected." Only two years before she was born, it seemed clear that Princess Charlotte, only child of the Prince Regent (later George IV), would succeed her father. But Charlotte died in childbirth in 1817.

Suddenly succession was a frightening problem, for the Prince Regent refused to have more children by the wife he loathed and his eleven ageing brothers and sisters were either spinsters, childless or the fathers of bastards debarred from the throne. A grim Parliament demanded that the four unmarried Royal Dukes take wives and strive to produce an heir. To the perennially hard-up Duke of Kent the substantial allowance payable on the birth of an heir was temptation enough to cause him to jilt his French mistress of nearly 28 years standing and wed Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg, who at 30 was 20 years his junior. On May 24, 1819, a girl, Alexandrina Victoria, was born to this marriage of convenience.

By the time she was 11, Victoria was fully aware that she would be Queen and she solemnly stated, "I will be good." And on the whole she was, despite the contradictions and inconsistencies of her complex character. In her dealings with others she could be either tactful or blunt, sympathetic or implacable, direct or devious. She was at once a Queen of unparalleled dignity and a bourgeoise who adored dogs, horses and children. Treasuring memories, she yet loved change; physically brave, she could be frightfully nervous. Believing that Britain had a civilizing mission in the Empire, and a moral obligation to help "the poor natives," she ruled her subjects as an adoring mother – but dominated her children, grandchildren and numerous in-laws as an imperious Queen.

Recollections of Eight Decades

No British monarch has ever reigned longer – or lived longer – than Victoria. A Queen at 18, for 64 years she devoted herself to restoring the dignity of a Crown that had long been discredited by her Hanoverian predecessors. In this she was helped immeasurably by the devotion of her husband, Albert of Saxe-Coburg, who with sweet reasonableness and conscientious idealism, assumed many of the day-to-day burdens of government.

His death in 1861 ended both her happiness and, for a time, her popularity. Beset by dark despair for two decades, she avoided public functions. Only in her old age, as she slowly re-established her links with her people, did they remember her life-long dedication to their moral and material improvement. At her Diamond Jubilee they showed their gratitude.

Even at two Victoria's merry, mischievous face (left) had begun to show a certain earnestness, for her childhood on the whole was a sad, dull time. Her father, the Duke of Kent, died when she was only eight months old and as she grew up relations with her strict German mother, the Duchess (right), became increasingly cool and correct. But there were some benefits.

Later that morning the youthful monarch held her first Privy Council meeting with great grace and dignity. At times she glanced for encouragement at her Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, who stood by with documents for her to sign.

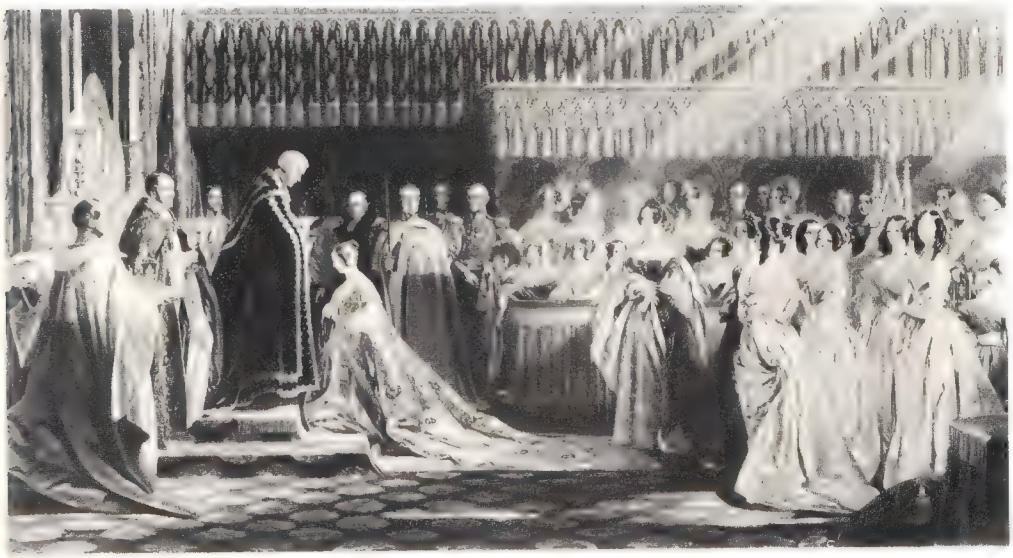
In the year before her coronation, Victoria found time to ride with Melbourne (left) and Lord Grey, a former Prime Minister. Melbourne treated Victoria as a beloved daughter, initiating her into public affairs. For her part she was happy to find in him a reliable and affectionate father-figure.

The Queen wore a diamond necklace and a dress of white satin trimmed with Honiton lace at her wedding to Albert on February 10, 1840, at St. James's Palace.

By 1846 they had five children: (left to right) Alfred; Edward, Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII; Alice; Helena; and Victoria, the Princess Royal. After her first child the Queen remarked "men never think, at least seldom think, what a hard task it is for us women to go through with this very often." She then calmly proceeded to have eight more.

At five (left) she was given an excellent governess, Fräulein Lehzen, whom she adored and who quite eclipsed her mother. Starved of friends of her own age, she lost herself in opera and ballet. But the innocence of childhood was soon over. At 15 (right) she was prepared to be Queen.

And at dawn on June 20, 1837, the 18-year-old Princess was woken at Kensington Palace by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chamberlain with the news that her uncle, William IV, was dead and that she was now Queen.



Victoria's coronation on June 28, 1838, was a success although the Archbishop mixed up the orb and the sceptre and forced the ruby ring on to her wrong finger. Her girlish figure added a poignant dignity to the awesome medieval ceremony and afterwards she wrote in her Journal, "I really cannot say how proud I feel to be Queen of such a nation."

After waltzing at Windsor with her German cousin Albert the following year, she cried ecstatically "Albert's beauty is most striking!" The couple were soon deeply in love.

The Queen's adoration of her husband was unbounded. She relied on him totally in matters of State and luxuriated in the "real and solid happiness" she found at his side.

By 1857, the addition of Louise, Arthur, Leopold and Beatrice completed the family. But the blissful marriage ended on December 14, 1861 when Albert, only 42, died of typhoid. "I stood up," she wrote later, "kissing his dear heavenly forehead and called out in a bitter agonising cry: 'Oh! my dear Darling!' and then dropped on my knees in . . . despair."

Shattered by Albert's death, Victoria assumed heavy mourning (left) and retreated to Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, or to Balmoral, her Highland home (right) where she could ride attended by her faithful servant John Brown. "The poor fatherless baby of eight months is now the utterly broken-hearted and crushed widow of forty-two," she lamented.

Grandchildren helped to take her mind off her dreadful loss. But the next 20 years of self-imposed seclusion annoyed her ministers and irritated the public.

In 1895 she visited Nice with her daughters Victoria and Beatrice. Although the Queen began to appear in public, she was uneasy before every outing and relieved when it was over.

Three years later a lucky photographer caught the Queen in an infrequent smile in public.

Even in 1891 the Queen still surrounded herself with pictures of Albert, her lost love.

In 1894 she holds her great-grandson Edward, later Edward VIII; with her on the left is her son, the future Edward VII and, her grandson, later George V.

Her ever-growing family was an increasing comfort to her in her twilight years. Arrayed round the old Queen in this group at Osborne are Prince George, later George V (left of centre) with a fatherly arm on his son George, later George VI. The Prince's wife Princess Mary of Teck, later Queen Mary, is sitting on the left in white holding a child.

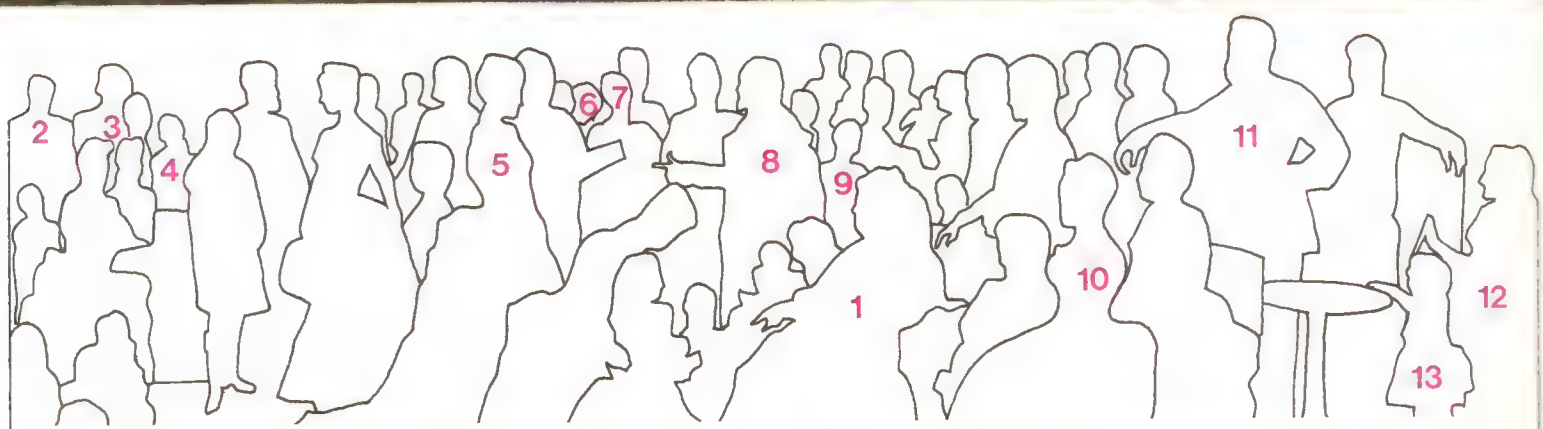
Resplendently attired for her Diamond Jubilee, Victoria could look back on a reign which had endeared her to millions of subjects all over the world.

Matriarch of Europe

Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 was the occasion for a vast family gathering at Windsor. To commemorate the event, all those who had been present in the palace were portrayed together in this composite painting - a lasting tribute to the Queen's legendary pride in her offspring.

As Victoria's brood married and had children, Chancellor Bismarck's unflattering description of it as the "stud-farm of Europe" became increasingly apt; her descendants – who today number more than 330 – married into the Royal Houses of Germany, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Greece, Norway, Rumania and Yugoslavia.

The Queen herself was an incorrigible matchmaker, though she hotly denied it. Her selection of Prince Frederick of Prussia for Victoria, her eldest daughter, was a triumph that improved drooping Anglo-Prussian relations. An equally important *coup* was her choice of Alexandra, a Danish princess, for her eldest son Bertie, the future Edward VII. He had had a reputation as a man-about-town but now, to the Queen's relief, the star-struck Prince wrote, "I really don't know whether I am on my head or my heels." It was a fine tribute to her matchmaking talents, which combined a sharp sense of dynastic politics with an intuitive knowledge of the hearts' desires of youthful royalty. She would have been delighted that her matchmaking continued to bear fruit as recently as 1947, when two of her great-great-grandchildren – Princess Elizabeth, later Queen Elizabeth II, and Prince Philip – were married in Westminster Abbey.



Of the 55 members of Victoria's family pictured here, ten became sovereigns of European States. They and others of special interest are keyed by number in the outline diagram. 1. Queen Victoria; 2. King George V, grandson; 3. Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, grandson; 4. Queen Marie of Rumania, granddaughter; 5. Queen Alexandra, daughter-in-law, wife of Edward VII; 6. Queen Maud of Norway, granddaughter; 7. Tsarina Alix of Russia, granddaughter; 8. King Edward VII, son; 9. Queen Sophie of Greece, granddaughter; 10. Empress Victoria of Germany, daughter, mother of Wilhelm II; 11. Kaiser Frederick III of Germany, son-in-law, father of Wilhelm II; 12. Princess Victoria of Battenberg, granddaughter, mother of Princess Alice (13) who was the mother of Prince Philip, husband of Queen Elizabeth II.

III. The Spithead Review

In 1897 there was nothing fusty to the idea of Empire. It was the very latest thing. Joe Chamberlain himself set the tone of the New Imperialism when he talked of the British Empire as an estate – a national asset, to be developed by the best technical and managerial techniques as he had developed his screw factory in Birmingham (and also, as it happened, though with rather less success, his sisal plantation in the Bahamas.) It is true that it was in a sense a development agency, distributing the skills of the industrial West through many backward countries, and even reviving stagnant cultures: but it was also a pageant, a trading device and an article of faith. The techniques developed by the British to hold this vast conglomeration together were at once mysterious and severely practical.

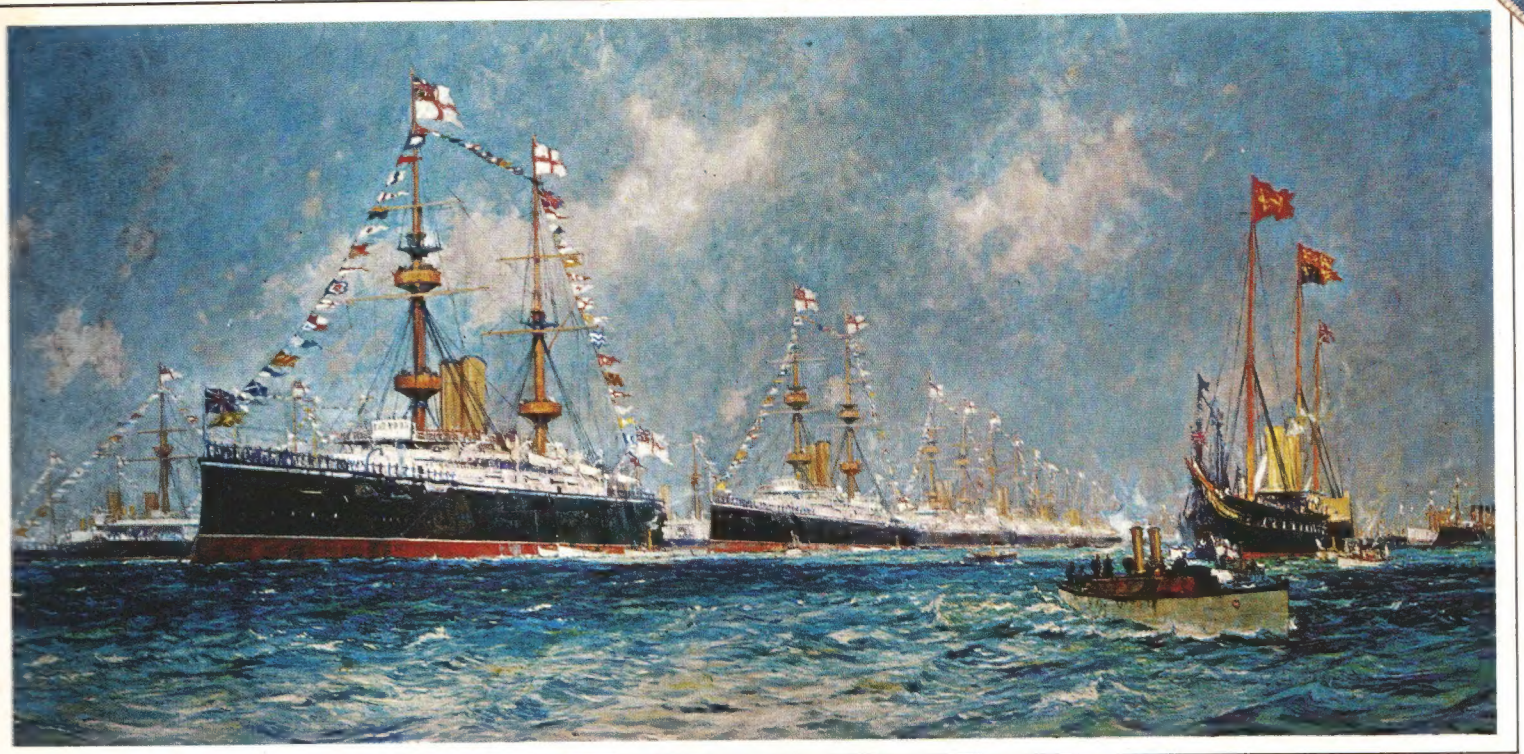
The first instrument of their supremacy was the Crown itself, embodied so satisfactorily in what Alfred Harmsworth of the *Daily Mail* liked to call a "Lady Ruler." Victoria was herself the pivot round which that gigantic structure orbited. She was the Great White Queen, the mystic figurehead of Empire, remote and half-divine. Her plinthed, throned and portico'd statues were everywhere, and her cult was inescapable. Tribesmen of Assam sacrificed kids to her. Saskatchewan Indians of the Canadian prairie called her "Great Mother." Ladies of Melbourne or Singapore were thrilled to curtsey to her nephews, sons-in-law or distant cousins. Débutantes of Dublin felt their hearts miss a beat when they heard the hoofs of her Viceroy's courier clattering down from the castle with a coveted invitation to a ball or reception.

This mystique of monarchy permeated the mechanism of Empire. Colonial governors were anointed, as it were, with the royal unction: with their flag-staffed palaces, their ceremonial costumes, their elegant aides, their gracious garden-parties, their crested carriages, their majestic protocol, their enormously superior wives and their interminable meals, they stood, however long the range or anomalous the setting, diffused by the royal radiance. Symbols of the monarchy were stamped across the Empire like talismans: crowns, flags, regimental crests, lions and unicorns, mottoes in medieval French, uniforms of stunning ostentation, orders of chivalry and nobility, Silversmiths By Appointment or insignia of the Royal Mail. The idea of imperial dominion was charged with primitive emotion, and the Victorian monarchy provided a necessary element of ritual magic.

The Prince of Wales, in the company of invited royalty, salutes the Home Fleet at Spithead.

More down to earth was a second instrument of supremacy, the rule of law. Throughout the disparate scattered realms of Empire, a pattern of justice generally prevailed – not merely legal justice, but a sense of balance, restraint, compromise. The rules were British rules, and they presupposed a common set of values among governors and governed: but a powerful binding force of Empire was a sense of fair play, backed by utter conviction. The motives of imperial expansion were innumerable, and often contradictory, but the Victorian concept of duty was among the most potent. Men were willing, in the 1890s, to dedicate their lives to the administration of the British Empire, mostly without hope of fame or wealth: they did so because they were convinced that the Empire was useful and benevolent to the world at large, to subjects as well as to rulers.

Aboard two passenger ships (right) Lords



The combined length of the lines of vessels, here being reviewed from the royal yacht *Victoria and Albert* (right), came to an astonishing 30 miles.

ommons gaped at the awesome ironclads.

This certainty, expressed above all in the rule of law, gave the Empire a kind of ideology, or at least an intellectual purpose and integrity.

There was no imperial code of law – justice was administered according to an extraordinary hodge-podge of customary law and local practice, varying from colony to colony: judges in India used simply to be told that if there were no precedents for a case they could with safety always base their conclusions upon two basic principles: "Equity and Good Conscience."

But no mystery of kingship, no high-minded hierarchy or order, could have held the Empire together without a third fundamental tool of authority: armed force. Like all other empires, the British Empire was based upon warlike power. It had been conquered by the sword and it was held by the sword – or more pertinently, by the battleship. The Royal Navy was the ultimate guarantor of Jubilee, and in its arrogant and sometimes peculiar grandeur the Empire was most accurately reflected. This was a sea-empire. Command of the sea gave it, in effect, internal lines of communication, and kept it clamped. Admiral Mahan, the American naval historian, discussing the influence of British sea-power earlier in the century, had described Britain's "distant, storm-beaten ships" standing between Napoleon and the dominion of the world. If he had been writing of *fin de siècle*, he might have envisaged those fleets supporting the whole edifice of Empire, standing guard in harbours across the world, patrolling the sea-routes of every ocean, paddling up the Irrawaddy or edging through North Sea mists, and ensuring by their mere enumeration in *Jane's Fighting Ships* (published for the first time that year) that the Queen's Empire stood inviolate, guarded by 53 ironclads and armoured cruisers, 21 more than France, her nearest rival.

So the most percipient observers of Jubilee, if they searched for a true gauge of Empire that summer, looked towards the royal review of the fleet at Spithead four days after the Jubilee procession, on June 26 – not so obviously an imperial occasion as the multi-racial procession to St. Paul's four days before, but far more explicit a statement of intent.

The poet Theodore Watts-Dunton expressed its message well in a poem called *Jubilee Greeting At Spithead To The*

Men of Greater Britain, a piece which, in a welter of mangled images, apostrophized Britannia as the celestial mother of a family of sea-states:

... Beloved Angel, Thou
Whose flag above Thy Channel ne'er is furled,
Thine England's wider moat is now Ocean, who lisps her name around the world;
In Northern sun – in Southern sun,
True daughters, yea to very death, are we
Of her whose morn hath but begun –
Whose robe, our hero-fathers won –
That robe the great uniting Sea hath spun –
Her Subject Sea.

In other, less bardic words – "Hands off the ocean routes! What we have we hold!" The colonial premiers well understood this text: they all went down to Spithead for the review, because they knew that the survival of their countries depended upon the Royal Navy. So did visitors from rival powers and subject territories: *they* knew that so long as the Royal Navy remained all-powerful, no seditious movement within the Empire would stand much chance of succeeding. The Royal Navy was an insular, introspective, proud and glittering institution, and its attitudes were terrifically confident: at Spithead it deliberately struck its grimmest and gaudiest pose.

Grim and gaudy: for the Navy's corporate character was a combination of ruthlessness and panache. The Spithead review was claimed to be the largest assembly of warships ever gathered at anchorage, and it must have been one of the most brilliant. In lines seven miles long more than 170 ships, including 50 battleships, lay dressed overall. Most of them were less than ten years old, all of them were preposterously ablaze with brass and bunting, and not one of them (it was carefully publicized) had been specially withdrawn from a foreign station. They were war-machines of formidable silhouette: painted white and yellow, cluttered with barbettes, torpedo-booms, riggings and conning-towers, some with funnels side by side, some with enormous turret-guns like fortresses – their crews in wide straw hats spotless in white beside the rail, their officers arrayed on the bridge in postures of unapproachable swagger.

The Prince of Wales and his guests – the Queen did not feel up to the strain of a long naval review – inspected the fleet in a little convoy of elegant yachts and steamers; and to provide the necessary Nelsonic impertinence, to add the panache to the ruthlessness, suddenly there burst through the stationary line of warships, unannounced and unexpected, the fastest ship afloat – Charles Parsons's experimental *Turbinia*, belching flame from its funnel and weaving exuberantly among the ironclads, to demonstrate to the world that there were British seaborne wonders yet to come.

Jubilee Day itself had ended with bonfires, pealing bells, banquets and sentimental toasts, and the world did not begrudge the old Queen its admiration. Even *Le Figaro* in Paris, not usually sympathetic to perfidious Albion, allowed that Rome had been equalled at last, if not surpassed; while *The New York Times* went so far as to declare the United States "a part, and a great part, of the Greater Britain which seems so plainly destined to dominate this planet."

Of course they did not exactly mean it. The Diamond Jubilee, like the British Empire itself, was comfortably swathed in half-truth, blarney and red serge. It was an oddly homely occasion; as Mark Twain wrote, all the braggadocio was really "no more than embroidery" to the presence of the Queen-Empress herself, a plain lady in her late seventies, sustained by stays and fortified by a taste for Scotch. There was indulgence in the air. Bygones were momentarily forgotten. Blemishes were temporarily overlooked. On such a day, when flags blew and champagne bubbled and bands puffed and the grand old lady, "tired" but marvellously "pleased," wiped away her tears, who would have the heart to do otherwise?

Punch **comments on the imperial frenzy of 1897: the British lion at Spithead with his cheering colonial offspring, says, "Lor' love you, my lads, this is the proudest moment of my life!"**

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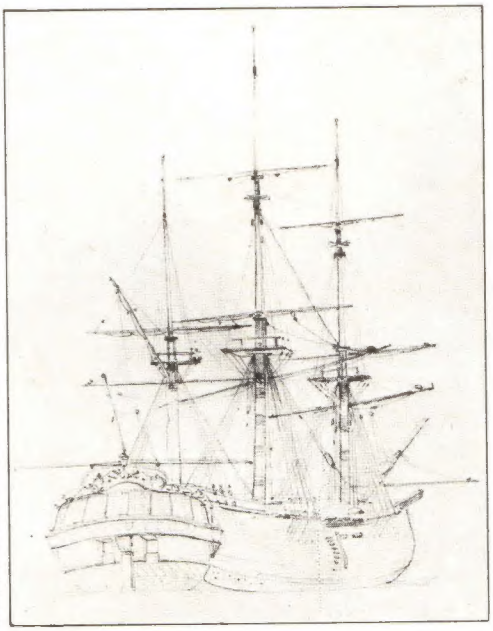

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